

**DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE  
PACIFIC AIR FORCES**

**MARRIAGE OF AMERICANS IN JAPAN**



**374<sup>th</sup> Airlift Wing  
Office of the Staff Judge Advocate  
Yokota Air Base Japan**

## MARRIAGE OF AMERICANS IN JAPAN

To begin the marriage process, contact the Personal Affairs Office. All persons, including American citizens who desire to marry in Japan must do so according to Japanese law. Marriage in Japan consists of a civil registration of marriage by the couple at a Japanese government office. This registration constitutes legal marriage and is recognized as such throughout the United State. Religious ceremonies are ceremonies performed by fraternal and similar organizations and not valid as legal marriages.

Diplomatic and consular officers cannot perform marriages. However, to register a marriage under Japanese law, foreign nationals must prepare an “Affidavit of Competency to Marry” signed and sworn to before his/her country’s consular representative in Japan (US Embassy or Base Legal Office).

The following is the procedure for Americans who wish to marry in Japan:

Step 1            Go to the Personal Affairs Office. After being advised to do so, the American citizens wanting to marry appear at the US Embassy or Base Legal Office with evidence of U.S. citizenship to prepare and sign the “Affidavit of Competency to Marry”.

Step 2            The couple must translate the “Affidavit of Competency to Marry” into Japanese. The Japanese form required for the registration of marriage (called the ~~th~~Kōn-in-Todoke”) must also be completed in Japanese. Consular offices generally will not assist with translation of these forms. American citizens unable to read and write Japanese may wish to employ the services of a professional translation agency or call upon friends for assistance. Two witnesses of any nationality who are over 20 years of age must sign the Japanese forms.

Step 3            The couple proceeds to the ward or city office for registration of the marriage. The marriage should normally be registered with the ward or city office having jurisdiction over one or the other party’s place of residence in Japan. After accepting the marriage registration forms, the local government office will issue a “Certificate of Acceptance of Notification of Marriage” (marriage certificate) in the Japanese language. This is the primary evidence of a valid marriage. American citizens may wish to translate their marriage certificate into English but should bear in mind that the Japanese language original is the only legal marriage document.

NOTE 1: The Embassy’s Consular Section is open to the public, Monday thru Friday, from 8:30 to 12:30 in the morning and from 2:00 to 4:30 in the afternoon. The Embassy is closed on Japanese and American legal holidays. The Yokota Base Legal office provides walk-in service for the “Affidavit of Competency to Marry”, Monday thru Friday, 7:30 to 11:00 a.m. and 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.

NOTE 2: The consular fee for the “Affidavit of Competency to Marry” is \$10.00 or the yen equivalent. The Japanese Ward or City Office fee is 200 yen for an ordinary marriage certificate and 1,000 yen for the more ornate “special” marriage certificate. The Base Legal Office does not charge any fee.

NOTE 3: **IMPORTANT!** The Local Ward or City Office maintains a permanent record of all marriages concluded at that office. No record of marriage is retained by the U.S. Government. American citizens should therefore be careful to retain the address of the office where they registered their marriage for future reference.

## DOCUMENTS REQUIRED FOR MARRIAGE IN JAPAN

In order to complete the “Affidavit of Competency to Marry”, the U.S. Government requires only proof of U.S. citizenship, a personal identity document with a photograph attached (a passport, birth certificate, military ID or Alien Registration) and, for military members, the commander’s permission to marry. In addition, the Japanese government requires the Marriage Registration Form (Kon-in Todoke), which is available free at any City or Ward office, and:

### A. Proof of Nationality and Competency to Marry:

1. U.S. Civilians:  
Certificate or Affidavit of Competency to Marry, with a Japanese translation  
United States Passport
2. U.S. Military Personnel:  
Certificate or Affidavit of Competency to Marry, with a Japanese translation  
Proof of United States Citizenship, such as a copy of birth certificate, or U.S.  
Passport or Certificate of Naturalization  
Military ID card
3. Japanese Nationals:  
Current (issued within a month) certified copy of Japanese family register  
(Koseki Tohon or Shohon)  
Personal Han
4. Other-country citizens:  
Certificate of Affidavit of Competency to Marry, with Japanese translation,  
issued by own Embassy  
Passport

**B. Letters of Consent for Minors:** Minor American citizens require a notarized letter of consent from their parents or legal guardian. The age of majority, which varies from state to state, is generally 20 for males and 18 for females. Japanese citizens under the age of 20 must have parents’ signed permission to marry (doisho) in two copies. Some Japanese offices use this age limit of 20 for foreigners as well.

**C. Military Approval:** Personnel subject to the Uniform Code of Military Justice are reminded that they must obtain permission to marry from the appropriate military authority. Information concerning this procedure is available from the unit commander or the Personal Affairs Office.

**D. Certificate of Alien Registration:** Foreigners who register a marriage at a ward or city office away from their actual place of residence in Japan must present a Certificate of Alien Registration from their ward office (not the Alien Registration Book or Card).

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Foreign nationals who wish to reside in the United States permanently must obtain an immigrant visa. The completion of marriage formalities in Japan is no guarantee that an immigrant visa will be issued to a non-U.S. citizen spouse. It is also important to remember that the documents presented to the Japanese government for marriage registration purposes may not be sufficient to obtain an immigrant visa. The nearest American consular office can provide further information concerning immigration to the United States.